

## A Marvelous Wonder

Habakkuk 1:5-11

An article posted online two weeks ago features “The Khmer Cloud Making Service.” That’s right, inventors in Cambodia have come up with a way for you to make your own designer clouds! For about a thousand dollars, you can purchase a machine with stencils to make your own bubbly floating vapors. Using a combination of helium and soap suds, the machine will help you to briefly decorate the atmosphere in a memorable way at your next big event. One machine can make about 3-5 clouds per minute.<sup>i</sup>

So, if you wanted to decorate the atmosphere on this Independence Day weekend, which shapes would you choose? A star? A heart? A smiley-face? My guess is that, with a little thought, most of us would choose a question mark. On this July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, there are so many questions hanging in the air about our country. Chief among them would be questions about its future. For those of us who know the Lord and His Word, we know one of the big questions: Will this country experience revival from God or removal by God? Is there to be a restoration of righteousness or the sharp sword of judgment from the Lord?

### A Violent Nation

The people of Judah were facing this question in the Book of Habakkuk. The prophet begged God to deal with the violence in his society (1:2-4). It was as if the law of God had been voided. Justice was thwarted on every hand. The wicked were surrounding the righteous, and the health of their society was in jeopardy. Doesn’t this sound like our country? So which would it be for the people of Judah, revival or removal? And which will it be for our country?

Habakkuk wanted to know how long God was going to tolerate this treachery. This question of “how long” comes up repeatedly in Scripture.

We should not be surprised to find this question lingering in our hearts as well.

The psalmist raised this question in Psalm 13:1-2. The glorified saints of God in heaven continue to raise the question (Revelation 6:9-10). There is nothing necessarily wrong with it, but the question helps us to think about where our trust is placed. For instance, Jeremiah raised this question in Jeremiah 12:4 and the Lord began to answer him in verse 5. Think about this question and answer carefully: **“How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trusted, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”** In this case, the Lord answered the “how long?” with a question about Jeremiah’s patience and enduring faith. Take special note of the phrase, **“and if in the land of peace, wherein you trust, they wearied you . . .”** In essence, the “how long” question was answered with “how long” or “how far” are you willing to trust God alone?

In the last message, we learned that “Habakkuk” means “one who embraces.” The prophet’s name and his questions cause us to ask ourselves if we are willing to embrace the Lord with faith in these difficult days.

The Book of Habakkuk helps us to wrestle with this question. If we wish to see God’s ultimate goal and pattern, we would find it in Habakkuk 2:14: **“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”** So the good news for believers is that finally and ultimately, the Lord will be glorified throughout the world. But how

will the Lord bring this about? And how will it be done? In today's message we will see the marvelous wonder of our Wonderful Messiah.

### How Big Is The Problem?

How deeply does the problem of evil run in the nations of the world? Is it a deeply rooted problem, or only a surface issue? Can it be overcome by minor repairs, or will the situation require a complete overhaul? Here in the city of Findlay, we have periodic problems with floods. The Blanchard River and Eagle Creek are especially prone to flooding. How should this problem be dealt with? Can we erect some small walls of sandbags to solve the problem? No, you can see the evidence with your own eyes. Some buildings and homes have been completely removed. Our county engineers and the Army Corps of Engineers have spent a great deal of time and money studying the problem. It is clear that the answer will involve a significant change across vast acres of land, including the river itself.

In the same way, we might be tempted to think that the problem of evil can be corrected by minor repairs. In fact, the Lord must bring about a dramatic overhaul, as indicated in this passage. Yes, He will bring about a foundational change that gets to the root of the problem. This is the marvelous wonder of our Wonderful Messiah.

### Sound the Alarm

As if to produce a loud warning siren, the Lord used four words of alert and alarm in Habakkuk 1:5: **“Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”** Those four verbs: “Look!” (Behold), “See!” (regard), “Wonder!” And “Marvel!” were designed to create the greatest possible impact on God's people. All of these are in the plural. The Lord responded to a faithful group of believers in Judah in answer to Habakkuk's prayer. And make no mistake, God's answer was terrifying. He introduced the marvelous wonder.

### The Chaldeans Are Coming

**<sup>6</sup> For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs. <sup>7</sup> They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. <sup>8</sup> Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle [or “vulture”] that hasteth to eat. <sup>9</sup> They shall come all for violence: Their faces shall sup up as the east wind, And they shall gather the captivity as the sand. <sup>10</sup> And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: They shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust [rubble], and take it.**

God promised to judge the great wickedness of Judah with the greater wickedness of the Chaldeans. This is a terrifying thought. In “sowing and reaping,” Judah's violence against its victims would be rewarded with greater violence against Judah. The Chaldeans would descend like leopards, wolves and vultures. In the next message, we will study Habakkuk's response to this news. But for today, it is enough that we wrestle with the way the Almighty God answers the abominations of a nation; we ought to marvel at this wonder.

- God brought an invasion from fierce and impetuous Chaldeans. This country rose to prominence in just a few short years – overthrowing the Assyrians and defying the Egyptians. They marched through the earth to seize homes and lands that did not belong to them (v. 6) Imagine what went through the minds of men as they were led away captive, while watching their wives and children being led away as hostages in a different direction.

- The Chaldeans were dreaded and feared and seemed to be an authority to themselves (v.7).
- The horrors of their false religion (v.11) were combined with mighty military success (v.8-10).

Let's be sure we understand this on this Independence Day weekend in the United States. Would God judge the wickedness of this nation by using the violence of a false religion? Would He use the military tactics of these violent people to judge a nation that God had blessed? The recent events in Europe – the birthplace of the Reformation – show us how God is using Islam to judge the nations. The recent terrorist attacks are on the minds of people throughout Europe. The reaction to this may have even led to Britain's recent vote to leave the European Union in the "Brexit." Now Britain – blessed by the Reformation, and graced by the Great Awakening—is wrestling with the onslaught of Islamic terrorism. So back to the question: Would God judge the wickedness of a nation by using the violence of a false religion? The answer in the Old Testament is "yes," and recent events show us it is still true today. This is a marvelous wonder, but it should cause us to keep our eyes on our Wonderful Messiah.

### **The Judgment of the Chaldeans**

**"Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, Imputing this his power unto his god"** (v.11). If God used the Chaldeans to judge Judah, would He hold them responsible for their actions? Yes! God would allow their violence to punish the violence of Judah. But God would also punish the violence of the Chaldeans. Remember God's goal? Habakkuk 2:14: **"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."** When the wicked Chaldeans began to praise their false god for their victories, the Lord destroyed them. I would ask you to use this to pray each and every time you hear someone commit violence in the name of Allah. You can

use Habakkuk 1:11 to remind the Lord that the perpetrator is praising his false god. Ask the Lord to turn aside this violence with His righteous vengeance. Our Wonderful Messiah is the marvelous wonder. We must cry out to Him!

### **The Judgment of Our Nation**

On some level, we all understand this. In a few short years, the Lord allowed Germany to grow into a dominant world power under Hitler. It seems only right and fitting that the United States and its allies should have been used to judge the terror of Nazism. The Allies were God's instrument to overturn Japan's emperor, who was thought of as a god. So, we were glad to be used to overturn the Holocaust brought on by the Axis powers in World War II. But have we taken a close look at our nation recently?

- Each year, in these United States of America, there are 1.3 million abortions. That's an average of more than 3,500 infants killed *each day*. If you remove the tiny part of one percent where the physical life of the mother was jeopardized, you draw a startling conclusion. We have become a casually murderous society. We are far worse than the Nazis who perpetrated the Holocaust. And in this last week, our Supreme Court's actions removed many of the remaining restrictions on abortion.<sup>ii</sup> In response, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito wrote, *"If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead . . . those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern."*<sup>iii</sup>

How will God deal with us? Even a casual observer of our country would note that the invasion of America has already begun. Our borders are open to terrorists. Recent news articles have highlighted the fact that many murderers are illegal aliens who have been deported repeatedly, only to return. This problem figures prominently in the recent

presidential campaigns. But consider the problem, even in our nation's capital.

- The immigration crisis in our country is fueling the rise of deadly gangs, especially in the area around Washington, D.C. The group, MS-13, is led by gang members from El Salvador. There are now 228,000 people from El Salvador living around our nation's capital.<sup>iv</sup> In the first four months of 2016, gang related crime has increased by 163% over the same period last year. (This is especially ironic since the name "El Salvador" means "The Savior!")

Isn't it ironic that the name of the nation behind these gangs reminds us of the One we need to turn to?

There is no better way to bring this message to the main point than by asking you to turn again to Acts chapter 13.

We are seeing the marvelous wonder of our Wonderful Messiah who will return to the Earth. Remember, it is here that the Apostle Paul quoted Habakkuk 1:5 with its alarming terms of alert (in Acts 13:40). But what was his point? What were they in danger of missing? <sup>32</sup> **And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,** <sup>33</sup> **God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.** <sup>34</sup> **And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.**

Paul's message about God's salvation pointed to Jesus, the Christ. In a world full of bad tidings, these are the glad tidings (Acts 13:32). Jesus, died for our sins. He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). It is only because of His death, burial and resurrection that we have any hope. He came to do the foundational work

– to get down to the bedrock of the problem of human evil. He alone can renovate humanity. Only His finished work gives us any hope.

But don't miss this: Paul connected the Gospel of Christ to Habakkuk's troubling message. So how was the coming of the Chaldeans connected to the coming of Christ? Paul supplied the answer to this in Galatians 4:4-5: **"4 but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."** When God looked upon the coming of the vicious Chaldeans, He was doing the preliminary work to bring His prophecies about the Messiah to fulfillment! Yes, He used the vicious violence of the Chaldeans to judge His people and pave the way for the coming of His Son. And we know that **"in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."** Are we troubled about the destiny of our nation? Certainly we are, and we ought to pray for heaven sent revival. But we can rest in the care of the God who gave us His Christ? He is our Redeemer. He has adopted us into His family. This is the marvelous wonder of our Wonderful Messiah.

## Appendix

### Who Is God?

- God is the One who reveals. He speaks and answers our prayers. v.5
- God is the Sovereign who is in complete control of human history. vs. 6-7
- God knows everything (including every human heart, vs. 6-7; the future events, military capacities, v. 8, and the outcome of future battles and wars, vs.9-10).
- God is Righteous and Holy (as seen by the fact that violent men are guilty before Him, v. 11).

### Doctrines

- God's Providential control over human history, vs. 6-7

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<sup>i</sup> <http://mentalfloss.com/article/82502/cambodian-company-offers-custom-clouds> accessed 07/01/16

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/07/01/484332807/5-things-to-consider-about-the-supreme-court-s-decision-on-texas-abortion-law>

- God reveals the horrors of false religion, especially when combined with military might, vs. 7-8.
- God will often reward violence with greater violence, vs. 9. (See Psalm 7:16)
- Though God is Sovereign, man is responsible and accountable for his actions, v.11.
- The certainty of God's promises and prophecies
- The Gospel of Christ, our Redeemer. Acts 13:32-34; Galatians 4:4-5

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<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/conservative-justices-bemoan-courts-future-n600741>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://dailycaller.com/2016/07/02/isis-executed-hostages-who-could-not-recite-koran-in-bangladesh-attack/>